

A Gift to Easter Neatcott from Mr Smith

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S E R I O U S
A D D R E S S
T O T H E
M E M B E R S
O F T H E
C H U R C H of E N G L A N D.

By SAMUEL SEYER, M. A.

Rector of St. Michael's, Bristol.

Let all things be done decently and in order.

1 Cor. xiv. 39;

B R I S T O L:

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2 E R I O U S
A D D R E S S

TO THE

M E M B E R S

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BY SAMUEL STYER, M. A.

Rector of St. Andrew's Church, Bristol



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THE
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

THE late attack upon our national church by some of her nominal members, hath already raised up several able advocates in her defence, and will doubtless produce many more, should it be continued. The arguments brought in defence of our ecclesiastical establishment may convince men of learning and candor, that our articles and liturgy can only become exceptionable to those, who object to the doctrines contained in the scriptures.

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tures. When persons give themselves the liberty of questioning the plain truths revealed in holy writ, and think it a mark of wisdom to reject the practice of antiquity, no wonder, that they should find fault with the constitution of the Church of *England*, which is wholly founded on these truths, and formed upon this practice. The most grateful acknowledgement then is due to these learned men, whose writings will remain to their everlasting honour, and be a standing proof, that whenever she is attacked by her enemies, there have never been wanting men of distinguished abilities to stand forth on her behalf.—But in regard to common Christians, the best method to keep them firm in their attachment to the established church in which they have
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TO THE READER. iii

been bred, is to make them see the beauty of it, and to lead them to such a spiritual and devout use of her services, as to be productive of a real and substantial piety. For this purpose the following thoughts were penned; and for this purpose alone they are now published. The author of them is fully convinced that a due reflection on the correspondency of the subjects which compose our public service with the doctrines of the gospel, and a proper use of our liturgy will keep her members stedfast in the profession of the true religion, and convey unto them every advantage that can possibly be expected from the visible church of CHRIST. —God grant, that this happy end may be answered by the ensuing treatise, which, without pretending to advance any thing new,

new, aims only to remind Christians of what may have occurred to them in the course of their reading and thinking on this subject; and which the author of it wishes may be considered as a testimony of his affection to the whole household of faith, and particularly to those, who are placed under his immediate care and inspection.

A
SERIOUS ADDRESS, &c.

MY FRIENDS,

THE duty of public worship derives its obligation from the express institution of God; the uninterrupted practice of all persons, who have made any profession of religion; and the reasonableness of the thing itself.

WE have the strongest assurance that God immediately after the fall commanded the sacrificing of beasts, as expressive of man's apostacy, and exhibiting the method of his recovery by an expiation to

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be made by blood: we meet with altars erected by the patriarchs before the law of Moses: we know that a ritual of public worship was ordained by the command of God himself to Moses; and our Saviour hath declared, that *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you.* Matt. xviii. 20.

If we take a view of the practice of all people, who have made any profession of religion, we shall find them in every period of time, and in their widest dispersions concurring in the exercise of this duty. Thus Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God: the patriarchs called on the name of the Lord, at the altars occasionally erected: the people of Israel continued in a great measure the public instituted

tuted worship, first in the tabernacle, and then in the temple, until the final destruction of Jerusalem : the apostles and disciples of our LORD immediately after his ascension assembled themselves together for the performance of religious duties every LORD's day ; and all societies of Christians ever since have followed their example in this respect. And tho' in the patriarchial history the act of offering sacrifices is only expressly mentioned, yet it is very natural to infer that these sacrifices were accompanied with Prayers, Praises, Confession of Sin, and other acts of Religion before the law, as we are assured they were under the Jewish œconomy. The great ends of public worship were always the same, tho' the form may have been varied according to the

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different

different circumstances, of times, places, and persons.

THEN as for the reasonableness of this duty ; 'tho', as in many other instances, man unenlightened, could not perhaps have discovered his obligations to it, at least was never left to himself in this respect, yet he could not but apprehend and own the reasonableness of it when discovered. As indeed what can appear more reasonable, than for creatures, who are endued with a capacity of knowing their dependence on God for their creation ; for his placing them in the rank of reasonable beings ; and for the repeated mercies conferred upon them, publickly to return to their great Creator and Benefactor the acknowledgment of prayer, praise

praise and adoration? And the force of this obligation encreases upon Christians, who beyond the common blessings of Creation and Providence, enjoy the great additional one of Redemption to raise in their hearts the devout affections of gratitude, and to fill their mouths with praise and thanksgiving. — Arguments these sufficient to remind you, of what you are, I trust, already convinced, that the duty of public worship claims your most serious attention.

Nor therefore to insist farther on the force of these arguments, which prove the obligation of religious worship in general, my present design is to direct your thoughts to the particular exercise of this duty as

appointed to be performed in the church of England.

To this end it may not be amiss to remind the members of this church of a peculiar advantage they enjoy, which perhaps many of them have not enough attended to, namely, of having a stated form of public worship. For however useful extemporary prayer may be in our private addresses to God, where every one knows the plague of his own heart, and the graces he in an especial manner stands in need of, yet the making this the usual method of presenting our petitions to Him in the public assemblies of Christians carries a great impropriety with it: For in order to raise the worshippers to a devout address

address to the Throne of Grace, the subject-matter of the prayer ought first to be considered, and judged fit for them to ask of God; their hearts should be affected with the sense of the necessity thereof to their own happiness; and their devotion enlivened with an earnest acknowledgment that their whole dependence is placed on God for the supply of what they so ask. But how can this judgment be formed, or these affections raised within them, when the subject-matter of the prayer still remains in the breast of the leader of the congregation; which, for ought they know, may be improper for them to join in; and if it be, cannot, after once it is uttered, give time for the exercise of that preparation, which seems necessary to elevate their devotion: because the speaker

going

going on to another subject must of course leave the hearers in much confusion of mind? and no doubt many can attest this truth, that after their hearts have been warmed with a very pathetic prefatory address to God, they could not heartily join in the conclusion of the prayer, because it has appeared modelled according to the private principles of the speaker, which are found to be very different from such, which they have imbib'd.

BUT you my brethren of the established church, have, as I before said, a very great advantage in this respect. Our form of prayer is open to all; and every one has an opportunity of judging of the fitness and propriety of the several articles relating to prayer, to intercession, and to praise.

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You may privately meditate on those important subjects, which compose your public address to God, and beg of him to raise in your minds dispositions suitable thereto: you may make a solemn surrender of yourselves to his will, and confess your whole dependence on Him alone for the supply of all your wants spiritual and temporal.—Affections these, which will doubtless accompany you to the house of God, and inspire you, by his blessing, with a serious and substantial piety.

BUT least a customary use of this stated form of prayer should degenerate into lip-service (as is objected by the abettors of extemporary public prayer, but which perhaps is not so true as pretended) give me leave to offer a few observations on the liturgy

turgy of the Church of England, and to recommend some rules for your direction in the use of it.

THE Apostle's charge to the church of Corinth, 1 Cor. xiv. 39.—*Let all things be done decently and in order*, is, I presume, the general plan, which all societies of Christians have agreed on as a model for their public service. The different opinions of Christians, as to what is decent and orderly may have indeed introduced a variety of forms; but however various these may be, all of them lay claim at least to decency and order. And even this variety, when the fundamentals of our most holy religion are preserved inviolate, may be no hindrance to the great end of all external worship, namely the devotion of the heart to,

to God: just as we see in the body politic, the different modes of civil government concur to support the obligations of government in general. Tho' it must be allowed, that in both cases, some modes have a more direct tendency to this end than others.

I HAVE no intention to draw a parallel between the ritual of public worship enjoined in the Church of England and that in other churches. It is sufficient to observe, that the Liturgy of our Church is founded on decency and order, and is calculated to produce a real, that is, a spiritual devotion. Where this end is not answered, the fault arises not from the composition of it, but from the negligence, and improper behaviour of those, who use it.

Now one principal design of the compilers of this Liturgy seems the dividing the public service in such a manner between the minister and congregation, as to excite the devotion of both, and to express a mutual desire of promoting each others salvation. From breaking this beautiful order proceed most of the irregularities too observable among those, who frequent the public service. As for instance; whilst the congregation repeat those parts of it appropriated to the minister, they are guilty of an absurdity which can proceed from nothing but ignorance, or carelessness: and whilst they whisper over the service, they not only interrupt others, but hinder themselves from attending to the prayers audibly pronounced by the minister. In those parts, which are the minister's office to re-
peat,

peat, he ought to be the only speaker: the duty of the congregation is to join with him in lifting up their hearts to God, and to express their sincere desire that the prayers thus offered up may be heard and accepted of Him, by a serious pronouncing Amen at the close of them.—The service thus perform'd, tends effectually to promote a spiritual devotion, and becomes, as it ought to be, a reasonable service. Where this decent order is not observed, it conveys not that comfort for which it was calculated, and gives occasion to call it, as in truth it will be, but a mere matter of form, of no benefit to those, who frequent it, and unacceptable to God, to whom it is thus negligently offered.

ANOTHER great design in the compilers of the Liturgy was to diversify the public service, so that the mind being not fixed too long on one particular act of religion, the attention may be kept up by a pleasing variety.—Thus after a solemn confession of sin, and an authoritative declaration of pardon to those, who truly repent, and believe God's holy gospel, the worshipper proceeds to sing the praises of God in those psalms, which were dictated by the Holy Spirit. After which he is taught to compose his mind to listen to instruction from portions selected out of God's word. When thus taught, he is called upon to make a confession of his faith; and concludes with prayer to God for future mercies, with intercession for others, and thanksgiving for blessings already received.

ed.—This instructive variety, I say, greatly relieves the mind, and cannot but excite every religious sentiment due from creatures to their Creator; from redeemed man to his redeeming God.—And since confession of sin, intercession for others, thanksgiving for mercies, and hearkening to instruction are so distinct in their natures, as to excite very different affections in us, it behoves us to endeavour to bring our minds to correspond with these several offices of religion: whereby we shall not only go through them with greater satisfaction, but reap more advantage from them.

ANOTHER thing very observable in the Liturgy of our Church is the shortness of its collects: a circumstance peculiarly adapted

dapted to continue the spirit of devotion. It is too evident, that the mind is apt to wander in acts of religious worship; and that an admittance is easily given to secular thoughts even upon those solemn occasions: how great need have we therefore of every help to recall our wandering thoughts to their proper subject? A solemn invocation frequently renewed; the conclusion of a collect in the interesting name of JESUS CHRIST; and an Amen audibly pronounced have often brought back the straying mind to a sense of its duty, and fixed its attention afresh on the great business in which it ought to be engaged.

THERE is no occasion, I persuade myself, to remind you, that the significancy
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and decency of those few ceremonies observed in the service of the Church; the gravity of the expressions in the Liturgy, and their correspondency with the doctrines contained in the holy scriptures, conspire to raise in the devout soul sentiments of true piety, and exhibit a system of public worship, sufficiently perfect to satisfy the humble Christian, that it is his duty to comply with the use of it in the assemblies of the saints.——The Constitution of the Church of England, including its liturgy and decency of religious service, has always been esteemed the bulwark of the reformation, and was owned as such by those who were principally instrumental in effecting it. The foreign Reformers, who from their particular situation, as well as from the political

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cal situation of those places, where they began the Reformation were obliged to model their several Churches not quite agreeable to their wishes, bore witness to the excellency of our ecclesiastical constitution ; and they congratulated the happiness of the English nation, whose circumstances allowed *them* to frame *their* Church according to the practice of antiquity, as well as the pure word of God. And indeed it justly deserves the encomiums they have bestowed upon it. For it was the result of the mature deliberation of some of the ablest, and most pious divines in England, who were in their days an ornament to their profession, and some of whom gave up their lives in attestation to the truth : it was submitted to the discussion of the two venerable assemblies of the nation in

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parliament, stamped with their authority, and established as a law of the land by Royal Authority.

THESE are the peculiar advantages which you, my friends, enjoy in the construction of the public offices for divine worship; which you ought therefore gratefully to acknowledge, and zealously endeavour to improve to your spiritual welfare. And that the constant use of them may not degenerate into mere outward formality, suffer me in the spirit of love to offer the few following directions to you in this point: which proceeding from a real regard to your spiritual interest, and from an affectionate concern for the honour and prosperity of that Church, which I

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regard as truly apostolical, I make no doubt, you will candidly receive.

FIRST then consider, that external worship unless it corresponds with and springs from inward devotion, is far from being pleasing to God. Outward acts of religion are both marks of that religion, which is seated in the heart, and likewise the means of exciting those sentiments of piety, those professions of dependence, and those returns of praise, which are due from imperfect dependent man, to his good and all-perfect God. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Rom. x. 10.—A settled faith in God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, as the
Giver

Giver of all goodness, as the Author of our salvation, and as the Sanctifier of his people must first be deeply rooted within us, before a confession available unto salvation can be uttered by the mouth. Unless your minds are duly instructed in the fundamental articles of the true religion, and your hearts affected with a deep sense of God's love to you; of your own wants, and of the necessity of applying to Him alone for the redress of these wants, you cannot *pray with the spirit, you cannot pray with the understanding.* 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

Ask yourselves then severally, whether you have laid this foundation for the right use of religious ordinances. Have I, may each one say to himself, so thoroughly considered my own depravity, and my

own personal transgressions as to be convinced that I am in my natural state a child of misery; and to enable me to make an unfeigned confession of sin? Have I so heartily accepted the redemption by JESUS CHRIST; and do I so entirely depend on a reconciliation with my offended God thro' his merits, as to receive the declaration of pardon upon my repentance and faith with confidence and comfort? Have I so submitted myself to be taught of God, and surrendered myself so absolutely to the instruction of the divine Spirit, as to hear the word of God with humility of heart, and teachableness of disposition? Do I so thoroughly believe the fundamental articles of the christian faith; and am I so determined to hold fast this form of sound doctrine even at the

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the hazard of my life, as to make a sincere and open confession of this faith? Have I cultivated such an universal charity in my soul, as to incite me heartily to intercede for the temporal and eternal welfare of all men? And have I so reflected on the numberless Mercies of God to my soul, as to express my grateful sense of them in devout thanksgiving?—These are the general and interesting subjects of public worship; which indeed we shall very improperly and uselessly attend, unless these subjects are deeply rooted in our hearts, and have taken possession of our affections.

In order then that your public attendance in the house of God may become a reasonable service, let me advise you to
read

read over the Liturgy in your retirements at home ; and to meditate in your closets on the important subjects thereof, in order to be affected with them. Do this often and seriously ; and I make no doubt but such pious meditations will, thro' God's blessing, animate you with a substantial piety in your public exercises of religion : you will, as the humble Publican did, return home with the comfortable hope of being justified and accepted of God.

For want of this private meditation on the subjects of public prayer, many, I fear, attend the service of God in the Church even during their lives to very little saving purpose ; many lay themselves open to the wily snares of the Devil, who persuades them to discontinue their attendance

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ance on divine ordinances, in which they unhappily experience no comfort; whilst others absurdly object the want of spirituality in that form of prayer, which only can become formal to those, who join in it without that preparation of the heart, which every religious institution requires:

THAT you then, my Friends, may not err in this respect, permit me to lay before you a short scheme of directions in the use of our established Liturgy, as a guide or help, to what your own thoughts may farther suggest to you on this subject:

To this end I will go through the form of Common-Prayer appointed upon ordinary days, and this only in its general parts. What shall be said upon this subject

ject will, I apprehend, be a sufficient direction, which with suitable variation may be easily applied to every other branch of it.

HERE then let me begin by observing to you, that it is incumbent on you to be present at the beginning of the service: since by dropping in one after another, when it is begun, you break in upon the beautiful settled order of public worship; you deprive yourselves of some acts of religion which it is your duty to perform; and moreover disturb others who are already engaged in them.—If you are there a little too early, you may usefully employ yourselves in devout meditations on the great business you are come upon, and the Majesty of that incomprehensible Being

ing you are going to address. Far, very far be it from you to employ this time in trifling talk, or in trifling thoughts.

As it is judged proper, that the service should begin with confession of sin, and with a declaration of pardon to those, who truly repent and unfeignedly believe God's holy gospel, it is therefore ordered by the Rubrick, that " at the beginning
 " of morning prayer the Minister shall
 " read with a loud voice some one or
 " more of these sentences of the scriptures that follow. And then he shall
 " say that which is written after these
 " sentences."

Now these sentences previously read over, and duly weighed, will, in your

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public

public devotions impress on your minds a deep sense of your own sinfulness; will shew you the necessity and nature of repentance; will enliven your hopes of mercy; and become a proper foundation for your serious Attention to the exhortation immediately to be given you by the Minister, and to the confession of sin soon after to be made by yourselves; as well as be the means of your receiving spiritual comfort from the declaration of pardon upon your repentance and faith.—These sentences, remember, are directed to be read by the Minister with a loud voice. Your ears are to be employed, you find, and not your tongues: and you will experience their advantage, if, when you hear them with your ears, you will endeavour to apply them to your hearts.——Next follows

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The EXHORTATION.

THIS is no other than an explanation of what is contained in the foregoing sentences. The Minister here exhorts you to look upon yourselves as sinners, to make a confession of your sins in order to pardon, and to hope for forgiveness of them thro' God's infinite goodness and mercy. And this he acquaints you is chiefly the duty of all, when they "assemble and
 " meet together to render thanks for the
 " great benefits they have received at
 " God's hands, to set forth his most wor-
 " thy praise, and to ask those things which
 " are requisite and necessary as well for
 " the body as the soul :"—that is in their public devotions, which consist of these several acts of adoration.—This exhor-

tation, both by the direction of the Rubrick, and from its very nature, is to be pronounced singly by the Minister; the duty of the congregation is silently to attend to it. How inconsiderately then do they act, who repeat this exhortation with the Minister? “Wherefore, says the Minister, I pray and beseech you to accompany me, &c.” The least recollection in the world, one might think would convince them that they are to be exhorted, and not to exhort either themselves or others at this time.—The service proceeds to the general confession of sin;—“accompany me, continues the Minister, “with a pure heart and humble voice “unto the Throne of Grace, saying after “me, Almighty, &c.”—I need not inform you that “a pure heart” cannot
here

here signify a heart pure or clean from sin, as is evident from the confession of sin immediately after enjoined: but a heart sensible indeed of its pollutions, yet sincerely desirous of being cleansed from them.—An awful call this both on the Minister and the Congregation to present such an heart to God, and to address him with that humble voice, as may denote true humility of spirit!

The C O N F E S S I O N.

THE Rubrick prefixed here files this, A general Confession, and orders it “to be said of the whole congregation, after the Minister, all (both Minister and People) kneeling.”—Here the Congregation bear a part in the divine service. As it is a confession of sin to be made by all,
so

so all must join in it with their voices, as well as with their hearts. Observe, this is called, A general Confession. And every confession of sin in the assemblies of Christians must be couched under general terms; because the sins of each individual worshipper are so different, and attended with such particular circumstances as cannot, nay ought not to be specified in a public form of Confession. Here it is the duty of all, when they repeat the general terms of confession, to charge their own consciences with the particular sins they have been guilty of in their own persons; and therefore this Confession ought to be pronounced very deliberately by the Minister, and as deliberately repeated by the Congregation. Observe again, that this Confession is to be

be made by all kneeling; which posture of our bodies very aptly represents the humility of our hearts upon this solemn occasion; and of course becomes the duty of all to repeat in this posture, except those who are incapacitated through bodily infirmities.

The ABSOLUTION.

“THE Absolution or Remission of Sins
 “to be pronounced by the Priest alone,
 “standing, the people still kneeling.”—
 This declaration of pardon, you find, is
 to be pronounced by the Priest alone,
 standing; in token that he here stands
 before the people as the Ambassador of
 CHRIST to his Church, pronouncing that
 pardon and remission of sins to the weary
 heavy-laden sinner, to whom his Master
 hath

hath promised rest: which pardon the penitent and believing Christian receives on his knees, in humble acknowledgment, that it is a free Act of Mercy vouchsafed unto him from God his Saviour, and of a solemn renunciation of all merit of his own.——What then can exceed the absurdity of those, who inconsiderately repeat this Absolution with the Minister? Let them consider, that this declaration of Remission of Sins is to be received by them with an awful solemnity; and in that sense alone becomes a part of religious worship.——And the conclusion of this Absolution leads them to reflect, that it is only on condition that their repentance is sincere and their faith strong! “Wherefore,” that is, since God hath given such a gracious promise of pardon

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don, "let us beseech Him to grant us true
 "repentance and his Holy Spirit, that
 "those things may please Him, which we
 "do at this present time, and that the rest
 "of our life hereafter may be pure and
 "holy, so that at the last we may come
 "to his eternal joy."

AFTER making a solemn confession of
 our manifold transgressions to God, and
 upon that confession proceeding from a
 true repentance and faith in the Mercies
 of God through JESUS CHRIST, having
 heard a declaration of God's forgiveness,
 we may humbly hope that we are the a-
 dopted children of God through JESUS
 CHRIST. Thereupon the service of the
 Church goes on to prayer properly so
 called, in confidence, that now being re-

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conciled

conciled to God, we may address Him as our loving Father; and accordingly begins this part of divine worship with the LORD'S PRAYER.

THE LORD'S PRAYER as dictated by CHRIST Himself, has always borne a great share in public worship among all societies of Christians from the times of the Apostles 'till now; except among a few, whose errors, in this and every other respect, if they proceed from a sincere mind, I trust, God will in his Mercies overlook. — Now this Prayer belongs equally to the Minister and People, and is to be pronounced audibly by both. But the misfortune is, that we shall repeat this Prayer too mechanically, unless we have deeply considered the nature and importance

tance of the petitions contained in it.—
Be it then your business to understand the full meaning of what you here pray for, and the great need you have of the grant of these petitions, and you will repeat it with reverence, and experience its divine energy.

THE few following sentences are preparatory to that part of the service that succeeds; which are to be pronounced alternately by the Minister and the People.—
When all standing up the ancient Doxology to the blessed Trinity is begun by the Minister, and concluded by the Congregation.

THE service then proceeds to praise God in a portion of those psalms, which

are in general admirably calculated for that purpose, and as dictated by the Holy Spirit of God claim our respect. These are usher'd in with a kind of preparative Psalm, being, as the title to it in our bible-translation expresses it, "An exhortation to praise God for his greatness, and for his goodness, and not to tempt him."——It is to be remarked that at the end of every psalm, the Church has appointed the Doxology to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be used; in order, I apprehend, to intimate to her members, that the faith of the Jewish and Christian Church is *One Faith*.

THE devout worshipper having been for some time employed in confession of sin, in hearing a pardon declared for sin upon
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his repentance and faith by an authorized Ambassador of CHRIST; and in singing praise to GOD as his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, is now called upon to attend to instruction; which instruction is drawn from the pure word of GOD, and portioned in Lessons daily appointed for that purpose. Here then it behoves him in an especial manner to beg the aids of divine Grace, that he may so hear, mark and learn as to digest the words of eternal life; knowing that it is not man who speaks to him but GOD: and to pray that GOD would open his eyes to see the wondrous things of his laws; and that the words thus heard by his outward ears, may be grafted inwardly on his heart, and bring forth the fruit of good living to the honour and praise of his holy Name.

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BETWEEN and after the Lessons out of the old and new testament, some hymns are ordered to be repeated, expressive of the praises of God for his Mercies vouchsafed unto us, and to be pronounced in turns both by the Minister and People.

THE devout Christian thus instructed out of the word of God in the articles of his faith, as well as in the obedience due to his divine Instructor, is called upon to make a solemn Confession of his Faith. — Now Confession of Faith has ever made a part of divine worship among Christians, founded, as may be supposed, on that apostolic declaration, *With the mouth confession is made unto salvation*: And indeed this confession seems so peculiarly characteristic of those, who worship ONE
 God,

GOD, through the ONE Mediator JESUS CHRIST, under the direction of the DIVINE SPIRIT, that it must be considered as of the very essence of Christian worship.—And this confession is ordered to be made in that ancient summary of the essential articles of the Christian Faith, call'd the APOSTLES CREED. This Creed, whether dictated by the Apostles themselves, or stiled so on the account of the apostolic doctrine contained therein, is doubtless of very ancient usage in the Church, as containing every thing necessary to be believed and acknowledged concerning the ever blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost, in the great works of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification.—This Creed, you are to repeat with the Minister audibly and reverently

rently in the singular number, as each worshipper is here suppos'd to make that confession of his faith, which will be available to his own eternal salvation.—

Say not then this Creed by rote merely, but let your confession be the result of your serious meditation on the several articles contained therein.—No doubt, you have duly considered what you there with your mouth profess to believe;—That there is a GOD; a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness, from whom you and all other beings have received existence, and that he is your Father, as well as peculiarly the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as represented in scripture.—I trust, you are convinced by the account of the fatal apostacy of man recorded in holy writ, and from what you feel in
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yourselfes of the fruits of this apostacy, that you, fallen yet reasonable and accountable creatures want a reconciliation with your offended God, your almighty disobliged Father; and that Jesus the eternal Son of God as well as the Son of Man is this Saviour, promised immediately upon man's transgression, revealed to the Patriarchs and holy men of old, and typified in the whole œconomy of the Jewish service; the CHRIST or Messiah, anointed of God to be King, Priest and Prophet to his people; who in the fulness of time became incarnate, and did and suffered all those things for your salvation, which are summed up in this Creed.—

I trust, you are truly convinced that the HOLY SPIRIT is the third divine Person in the ever blessed Trinity, ordained in

the great Covenant of Redemption entered into before the world began, to be the Sanctifier of all those, who believe in JESUS CHRIST, to make them a holy church or people to God, and to qualify them by his gracious influences to receive those inestimable benefits arising from having part in this redemption. — If you have deeply weighed these important truths in your minds (and if you have not, it is high time you should) you will render this public confession of your faith not only acceptable to the blessed Trinity in Unity, but instrumental thro' the Merits of CHRIST, to your own eternal interests.

AFTER this Confession of Faith, the Church directs her members to proceed to the more immediate exercise of Prayer,

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Intercession and Thanksgiving; agreeably to that direction of our great Master himself, *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you;* Matt. vii. 7 :—and to that exhortation of the inspired Apostle, *First of all, I exhort that Prayer, Supplication, and Intercession with giving of Thanks be made for all men.* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

BUT before she begins the actual exercise of these duties, she directs two small petitions to be pronounced, the one by the minister, the other by the people; petitions most strikingly expressive in themselves, which ought therefore to be spoken by both with the greatest solemnity.—The minister before either he or the people put themselves on their

knees in prayer to God is appointed to say, "The LORD be with you;" giving them in the name of his Master, whose he is, and whom he serves, a solemn Benediction; praying that the assistance of divine Grace may be present with them in this exercise of their devotions. To which the people answer, "And with thy Spirit." The LORD enable thee with a right disposition of heart to offer up the prayers of his people now prostrating themselves before Him, so that they may be accepted in the Name of the Beloved.—May this short hint serve as a serious memento both to ministers and people, how much it is their duty to preserve the bond of christian union and love, and to be mutually assisting in joint-prayer to God for the furtherance of their common salvation!

BUT

BUT to proceed. The three first Collects refer to those ordinary graces we daily stand in need of, both for our well-being in this life, and for the working out that salvation, which we hope for in the next. And the words of them are excellently calculated to produce in us a true spirit of devotion, in an entire dependence on God through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST for every thing needful or expedient for us, towards the attainment of these great blessings.—Consider them, my friends, seriously, and you cannot repeat them with indifference; you cannot but feel the importance of these interesting petitions to your present and eternal happiness.

THE four next Prayers are intercessory. The first is for the prosperity of the King.

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I exhort, says the Apostle, that intercession be made for Kings, and for all that are in authority. And here you are to recollect the great duty enforced upon you by the Authority of that Religion, which you profess of rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and of being subject to your earthly Governors not only for wrath, but also for conscience-sake, and you will, I doubt not, sincerely join in this prayer. Your own happiness in particular and the happiness of your country greatly depend on having this prayer accepted: therefore, let it proceed from hearts truly loyal to your lawful Prince, and conscientiously desirous of being instrumental to his welfare. —The next subsequent to this expresses your good wishes to the Royal Family, which I am persuaded you will readily concur

concur with ; as the happiness of your gracious Sovereign is nearly connected with theirs ; and as some of them are appointed by the laws and constitution of your country, to succeed him in the government of these kingdoms.

THE third Prayer is for the Clergy and People.—The duty incumbent on the Ministers of God's word towards the Flock of CHRIST committed to their care is very great, and the trust reposed in them is of the most important nature. Their own salvation, and in some measure the salvation of the souls of the people under them depend on the faithful discharge of their ministerial office. St. Paul was so sensible of the need he had of the assistance of all good Christians that he begs their prayers

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in his behalf. *Brethren*, says he, *pray for us.*——It must be remarked too, that there is a reciprocal duty incumbent on the people to their respective ministers, to give heed to the admonitions of these their spiritual guides, and to endeavour to improve under their doctrines. Therefore the Church has made choice of this prayer to God, “to send down upon our
 “ *Bishops and Curates, and all Congre-*
 “ *gations committed to their charge, the*
 “ *healthful Spirit of his Grace; and, that*
 “ *they may truly please Him, to pour*
 “ *down upon them the continual dew of*
 “ *his blessing.*”——You are sensible, I hope, that tho’ *Paul plants, and Apollos waters, yet it is GOD that giveth the increase:* and that ye are *GOD’s husbandry; ye are GOD’s building:* consequently you are not
 to

to look upon any man as if by his own power or holiness he could save you; but ye are to pray for the divine blessing on their endeavours, who are sent by God as Labourers in his Vineyard, as Ambassadors to beseech you in CHRIST's stead to be reconciled to God. You are not then from yourselves to hope for spiritual improvement, but humbly and devoutly to pray unto God for those Graces, for the ordinary attainment of which He hath settled this Ministry among you.

THE next Collect is to be used "for all conditions of men. *I exhort, says the Apostle, that Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.*

A prayer this which breathes a true spirit of Christian charity, inciting us to wish

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well to all men, especially to the household of faith. From expressing a hearty good-will to the whole race of mankind, that the salvation of God may be made known to all nations, it directs us next to pray unto God for the good estate of the universal Church of CHRIST, that by the gracious influences of his good Spirit all, who name the Name of CHRIST, may be led into the way of truth, and manifest the hope that is in them by a conversation as becometh the Gospel of CHRIST ;

“ that they may hold the faith in unity of
 “ spirit, in the bond of peace, and in
 “ righteousness of life.”—It then descends to commend to the divine Goodness the distressed members of CHRIST’s Church, “ all that are afflicted whether
 “ in mind, body, or estate, wishing and
 “ pray-

“ praying for them a happy release out of
 “ all their afflictions.”——This prayer,
 if sincerely offered up to the Throne of
 Grace cannot but inspire the pious Christian with universal charity. Hereby our hearts are enlarged towards our distressed brethren, and their wants spiritual and temporal are solemnly recognized by us: and, if we are consistent with ourselves, we cannot but see the duty incumbent on us both from the example and precepts of our divine Master, of endeavouring to the extent of our capacities to become instruments in his Hand of making his saving health known unto all men, of instructing the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and of discharging those duties we owe to all

men.—Blessed God, when we approach Thee at this time, may every rising thought of pride, malice and envy fall down before Thee, and do Thou inspire us with that charity, which Thou hast declared characteristic of CHRIST's true disciples!

THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING comes next. And it ought to be a general one, because made by the whole congregation.—Here then, as was observed upon the general confession of sin, it is every ones duty to recollect and to praise God for the particular Mercies they have received at his Hands. These it is impossible to specify in a public act of worship; and therefore under the general terms, a particular acknowledgment is to be

be made by yourselves.—Acts of thanksgiving to God for blessings received, besides the directions thereto given in the word of God, seem so much the duty of a reasonable creature to his great Creator, that we can hardly suppose any public worship compleat without it. Tho' our acknowledgment of Mercies adds nothing to the divine happiness, yet it shews a grateful disposition of mind, which God requires of man, and which even our common reason directs us to offer up to Him.——The words of this thanksgiving are comprehensibly expressive of the many temporal and spiritual blessings we have received from God, as our common Creator and Preserver, the Giver of all goodness, and the Author of our everlasting happiness, thro' his inestimable love

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in the Redemption of the World by JESUS CHRIST; as vouchsafing us thro' his divine Spirit the means of Grace here, and supporting us with the hope of Glory hereafter.——They instruct us likewise in the true nature of this our thankfulness, namely, that it is our duty, “ not only
 “ to shew forth his praise with our lips,
 “ but in our lives, by giving up ourselves
 “ to his service, and by walking before
 “ Him in righteousness and holiness all
 “ the days of our life.”——These, my friends, are very interesting subjects of thanksgiving to GOD, which if properly considered, will engage you with gratitude to unite in the pleasing exercise of praising the LORD for his goodness, and for the wonders that He doth for the children of men.

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To these and all the foregoing Prayers you are doubtless oblig'd to give great attention; which attention will best be paid by accompanying the minister with devotion and seriousness. A conveyance of the important subjects of these your petitions from the ears to the heart, will enable you to say Amen at the end of the several prayers with more fervor and real earnestness than when you repeat them over by yourselves: besides contributing thereby more to the decency of religious worship, which evidently appoints different parts to minister and people; the former being appointed to offer up to God prayers in the name of the people: while they in their turns are to confirm what he has prayed for by a solemn Amen.

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THE Church-service having thus run through the various subjects of religious worship draws to a conclusion; previously adding a prayer composed by an eminent Father of the Church, begging of God to accept the prayers and petitions of his servants, and to fulfil them so far as may be expedient for those, who have now been prostrating themselves before Him: however, intreating this above all, as of the highest consequence, to “grant them
 “the knowledge of his truth in this life,
 “and in the world to come life ever-
 “lasting.”

THEN follows the conclusion in that apostolical benediction, expressive of our faith in the blessed Trinity, and including all those Graces and Blessings, which are
 really

really necessary for us; *The Grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the Love of GOD, and the Fellowship of the Holy-Ghost be with us all. Amen.*

THIS, my Friends, is the common Prayer of that Church to which you belong: and indeed it is a most excellent one; which if you do not improve under, or if you shew your indifference to it by your frequent neglect, you betray either an ignorance or want of zeal in the things that make for your everlasting peace. If you complain of want of fervor in the use of it, the deficiency is certainly in yourselves. You have not enough considered the interesting subjects of divine worship, to be duly affected by them: you have not solemnly given your hearts

to God, and so you are listless and inattentive in your public devotions. If you were earnestly contending for the Crown of Immortality, I am persuaded you would find the Liturgy of the Church of England excellently adapted for the purpose of a pure, rational and spiritual worship.

If the foregoing plain thoughts should excite any of the Members of the Church of England to a proper and spiritual use of that excellent Liturgy established among us, to God be the Glory for making me the instrument of conveying them. — But however they may be received, I shall have the satisfaction of offering them to the world with an honest intention of being helpful to my Fellow-Christians,

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tians, and of testifying my regard to that
Church, whose constitution I revere with
the utmost sincerity.

I am,

My Friends,

Your Servant in CHRIST,

Samuel Seyer.

(1811)

and the following are the names of the

persons who have been appointed to the

positions of the following offices

of the following offices

of the following offices

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POSTSCRIPT.

The following descriptive notion of the Church of CHRIST was sometime since written down for my own private satisfaction. It is now submitted to public perusal as a supplement, I trust, not impertinent to the subject of the foregoing treatise.

The CHURCH.

THE outward constitution of the church consisting of articles, discipline, &c. may be compared to the bounds of an estate: the several ordinances of religion, such as public prayer and sacraments, are the instruments of husbandry used for the cultivation, manuring, &c. of the lands

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contained within these bounds:—the graces of the Gospel springing up in the hearts of men, and adorning the lives of christians, are the fruits produced from the land they cultivated and prepared. — Let us pursue this allegory. — It is evidently necessary, that a due attention be given to secure the bounds, otherwise the land contained within them would lie open to be plundered of its produce by invaders of every kind. — So in Religion, it is equally necessary to defend the external Church-constitution; otherwise the Church will be invaded by Heretics and Schismatics, and be plundered of its sacred deposits, the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel of CHRIST. — But should the owner of the estate lay himself out entirely in securing these bounds, and not at the same time
be

be employed in cultivating the lands, he could expect no produce, and would have only the name of an estate.—So in Religion: if our whole attention be employed in defending the external Church-constitution, and no regard paid to attain the fruits of the Spirit, the true and genuine piety of the heart, by a spiritual use of the ordinances of Religion, we shall have indeed the name of a Church, but we shall not be the true Church of CHRIST, which consists of holy persons united to CHRIST their head, by being one spirit with Him; we shall have the name, but shall know nothing of the power of Christianity.

AGAIN.—Without the instruments of husbandry the owner of the estate could not prepare his soil for the reception of
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the seed, from which he hopes to reap a plentiful harvest ;—without manuring his ground, his fields would soon become barren and unfruitful :—without lopping his trees, retrenching his hedges, and rooting up the noxious weeds, his lands would be overshaded, much of his ground would be lost by the overspreading of briars and thorns, and the noxious weeds would so encrease, as to choak the seed sown, and to destroy the fertility of his otherwise richest pastures.——Thus it is in Religion.——Without the ordinances of religion, without frequent exercise in prayer and praise, without solemn profession of our faith, without serious confession of sin, without a devout participation of the sacraments, our souls would be indisposed for the reception of the word of God, the
seed

seed of divine grace :—without the food and nurture of divine ordinances, we should be barren and unfruitful in every good word and work :—without a frequent call to meditate on heavenly things, we should be over-run and choaked with the cares and pleasures of this world, those noxious weeds, which, unless rooted up, hinder the operations of divine grace in our hearts, and drown us in sensuality.

ONCE more. — When the bounds are thoroughly secured, when the soil is completely cultivated and manured, when the seed is sown with the utmost care, does the owner depend on the security of his hedges for the fertility of the land? Does he look to his plough, his harrow, or his spade for a plentiful harvest? Rather,

if he thinks aright, does he not look up to Providence for a blessing on the external means he hath made use of ? Does he not from the great Author of nature expect to receive the former and the latter rain to moisten the clods of earth, which would otherwise be an unfruitful bed for vegetation ? Does he not from God expect the invigorating heat of the solar light to expand the nicely folded parts of the buried seed ; and the reviving breezes of the wholesome air to give the sprouting vegetable health and strength ? Must he not hope for the scorching beams of the Summer-Sun to harden some of the fruits of his ground, to concoct others, and to render them fit for the use of man ? These things neither his own care, neither his plough, his spade or his manure can command,

mand, and therefore here he waits as an humble expectant of these blessings from the bounteous hand of the God of nature.——Thus should it be in religion.

——When the constitution-bounds are secured to keep out Hereticks from the Church of CHRIST; when we have defended the excellency of an establishment against all Gainfayers whatever; when we have devoutly used the means of Grace reached out unto us in the ordinances of religion, we are to look higher than ourselves, higher than these ordinances for the erection of the kingdom of God within us. We must look to the invisible operation of the Spirit of God upon our hearts, to make us true and real Christians.—We are to consider that it is God alone, *who maketh us to will and to do of his*

good pleasure.—It is therefore on Him alone, that is on the divine communication of his holy Spirit, that we must depend for having our hearts converted to God, and for being united to Him in love. *We are GOD's husbandry; we are GOD's building.* Let the word of God, the seed of divine Grace be ever so diligently and faithfully sown in our ears; yet it is God alone who giveth the increase: it is God alone, who saveth those that believe. The ministers of his word X are only instruments in his hands: their commission can only reach our ears; it is God, who must touch and convert our hearts.——We are, and we ought to esteem ourselves, happy in being Members of an established Church, wherein the doctrines of the gospel are taught in
their

their original purity: we ought to rejoice
 in having the ordinances of religion ad-
 ministred in their native simplicity. But
 let us not rest here. These are the ladder
 to the heavenly Jerusalem, but they are
 not the blessed City. For admittance
 there, we must apply to divine Grace, to
 the secret inspiration of God's spirit with-
 in us. It is this alone, which can unite
 us to God in CHRIST: it is this alone,
 which can make us the adopted sons of
 God in CHRIST JESUS.——When we
 have thus given ourselves up to the guid-
 ance of God's spirit, we shall bring forth
 the fruits of the spirit Joy, Peace and
 Meekness: we shall worship God in spirit
 and in truth: and be thoroughly persuaded
 in our minds, and evidence to others by
 these fruits abiding in us, that that we are
 true

true members of the mystical and spiritual body of CHRIST; and being united to Him here in love, we cannot fail of reigning with Him in glory to all eternity.



THUS is the external Church of CHRIST the Handmaid to lead us to his kingdom within us, which is the great end of all outward ceremonies of religion. Unless this end be kept in view, and constantly pursued, all our boasted outward performances are nothing but a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

This Page and Page 10 Line 5 for 1 Cor. xiv. 39, read 1 Cor. xiv. 40. — p. 8, l. 10, for patriarchial read patriarchal. — p. 19, l. 1, for Authority read Appropriation.



